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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 02/12/08

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ARTICLES:

(1) U.S. Marine suspected of raping girl to be sent to the prosecutors; Prime Minister Fukuda orders cabinet ministers at meeting to deal properly with issue

Tokyo Web (Full)
11:05 AM, February 12, 2008

In the case of the U.S. Marine suspected of raping a junior high-school girl (14) in Okinawa, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda stressed this morning at a meeting of the Lower House Budget Committee his determination to clear up the facts of the matter and make efforts so that there would be no recurrence. At a meeting of his cabinet, he ordered: "This is an extremely serious problem. I want it handled properly." The Okinawa prefectural police today will send the case to the prosecutors of U.S. Marine Staff Sergeant Tyrone Hardnott, who is attached to Camp Courtney and lives at Shimabukuro in the village of Kitanakagusuku in Okinawa Prefecture.

A strong reaction is growing in the prefecture toward this case. This afternoon, the governor's director of public affairs Akira Uehara and educational director Morikazu Nakamura will visit the

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Marine base and other locations to protest and demand that there be no recurrence.

According to the investigation by Okinawa Prefecture, the suspect on the night of the 10th allegedly raped the girl in his car that was stopped on the road in front of a public park in Chatan Village. The suspect has denied the charge.

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(2) Government asks U.S. side to strictly enforce military discipline in case of schoolgirl rape by U.S. Marine in Okinawa

Tokyo Shimbun Online (Kyodo) (Full)
11:14 AM, February 12, 2008

In connection with the case of a U.S. Marine in Okinawa having been arrested on suspicion of raping a schoolgirl, the government as of today has transmitted its strong regrets to the U.S. side, and asked the U.S. to strictly enforce military discipline and take thorough measures to prevent a recurrence. In response, the U.S. side has stressed its intention to fully cooperate with the investigation.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura at press conference this morning pointed out: "(In the past, as well,) when there were major incidents, we repeatedly asked for strict enforcement of military discipline. This one will be handled properly based on the law and the evidence, but I cannot help saying that it was extremely regrettable." Asked about the impact on the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan, such as the relocation of Futenma Air Station, he said: "It is not my judgment to make. I would like them to put in their best effort to swiftly and appropriately settle this matter."

State Minister for Okinawan Affairs Kishida on the 11th made this comment: "I feel the pain that must be going through the hearts of the victim and her family. This kind of incident must never happen again."

(3) Paulson underlines need for U.S. financial institutions to speedily increase capital bases, denies injection of public funds

NIKKEI (Top play) (Full)
February 9, 2008

Tetsuya Minori, Washington

U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson in Washington gave an interview to the Nikkei ahead of the G7 meeting of finance ministers

and central governors, to be held in Tokyo on Feb. 9. On the back of growing concerns for a credit crunch resulting from the subprime loan crisis, Paulson indicated that the key to economy recovery is for American financial institutions to increase their capital bases, saying, "When we go through a period like this, the best thing that financial institutions can do is to quickly realize their losses and procure capital." At the same time, he pointed out that speed is essential in increasing capital, noting: "If there's any doubt that they will not have enough capital, they should go out and get capital where it is available."

Secretary Paulson brushed aside the option of using public money and

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encouraged self-help efforts by financial institutions, saying, "There may be other countries where government needs to be involved, but that is not the case in the United States."

He indicated some alarm about the future of the U.S. economy, noting: "I think our economy will continue to grow, but I see housing as the biggest risk. The housing crisis has not bottomed out yet; it will continue for a while."

About responses by Japan, the United States, and European countries to the slowdown of the global economy, the Secretary said: "We all

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need to look at what's going on in our own economies and come up with policies that are appropriate." About Japan, he commented: "The emphasis should be on boosting domestic demand. I've long been an advocate of the reform policies that drive long-term economic growth and I see a continuing need for that."

He also said that the use of public money was unnecessary because "the U.S. financial institutions have been moving quickly to realize losses and to raise capital."

Sovereign Wealth Funds of newly emerging market economies in the Middle East, Asia and other regions are becoming active as potential lenders. "The funds we have had dialogues with have all assured us that they are driven by the investment desire to maximize their profits after adjusting for risk," the Secretary said in a bid to discourage emerging moves to refuse foreign capital in the name of opposing Sovereign Wealth Funds. About Japan's investment in U.S. financial institutions, as seen in Mizuho Corporate Bank's investment in Merrill Lynch, Paulson said: "We welcome investment from Japan. The Japanese have been important investors in the United States for many years."

He also brushed aside concerns that the dollar might further weaken, saying: "The U.S.' economic fundamentals are solid, and I believe that the economy will continue to grow, and that these fundamentals will be reflected in our currency." At the same time, he said this about the yuan, China's currency, "Although we note that it has appreciated, we would like to see it appreciate a little faster than it has."

As for the deteriorating financial positions of so-called monolines, bond insurers, he said: "There are a number of people dealing with this. We have the regulators, because these institutions are regulated at the state level. We have rating agencies. We have financial advisors and investors, including financial institutions. And we're obviously watching them closely. Again, the message is the same, raise capital. And the emphasis is on the private sector. It is the private sector that makes capital investments."

Gist of interview with Treasury Secretary Paulson

? Financial institutions hit by the subprime loan crisis should raise capital.

? The U.S. economy, which is slowing down, needs appropriate policy measures.

? Japan needs to stimulate domestic consumption and to continue pursuing reform policies.

? The U.S. welcomes investment by Sovereign Wealth Funds.

? A strong dollar serves U.S. national interests. Skeptical about

direct and verbal intervention in the exchange markets.
? Hopes to see the value of the Chinese yuan to rise faster.

(4) Japanese, U.S. financial ministers confirm need to maintain close coordination

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Full)
Evening, February 9, 2008

Finance Minister Fukushiro Nukaga and U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Paulson met for about 30 minutes this morning ahead of the meeting of Group of Seven (G-7) finance ministers and central bank governors. They exchanged views on wide-ranging issues, including

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the state of the slowing U.S. economy in the aftermath of the subprime loan crisis. They also discussed their outlooks for the global economy, over which uncertainty is now looming large. The two leaders confirmed that financial authorities of the two countries should work out proper measures and enhance cooperation in dealing with the subprime mortgage crisis.

This was the second time for Nukaga and Paulson to meet, their first being in Washington last October. After the meeting, the two released a statement that went: "We exchanged frank views on the current state of the global, Japanese, and U.S. economies, the trend of the financial market, and climate change (the global-warming issue). We confirmed the need for the two countries to continue to closely cooperate with each other and keep good bilateral relations."

In the meeting, Paulson explained the current state of the U.S. economy, the Federal Reserve Bank's (FRB) decision to lower its key interest rate, and a package of emergency economic-spurring measures taken by the Bush administration. Nukaga hailed the prompt action taken by the U.S. He also explained how the Japanese government dealt with the financial crisis in the 1990s, after the bubble economy had burst, such as the injection of public funds in banking institutions to help dispose of their non-performing loans.

Nukaga and Paulson also discussed the idea proposed by Japan, the U.S., and Britain of creating a new fund for countermeasures against global warming. They shared the view that the proliferation of such natural energy resources as wind power and photovoltaic energy in developing countries would make it possible to simultaneously attain the two goals of reducing poverty and preserving the global environment. The two financial leaders agreed to urge other G-7 countries to join in in a bid to swiftly establish the fund.

(5) U.S. Secretary of Treasury expects to see expansion of domestic demand in Japan

YOMIURI (Page 8) (Full)
February 10, 2008

In a press conference after a meeting in Tokyo of finance ministers from the Group of Seven (G-7) nations yesterday, United States Secretary of the Treasury Henry Paulson said: "Japan has depended on

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exports and not on domestic demand. Japan needs to continue its reforms. Japan should rely more on domestic demand." He expressed his expectation for Japan to make more effort to expand domestic demand.

On the U.S. economy, Paulson stated: "I believe the American economy will keep growing. If the economy is growing, there will be no recession."

He then called on banking institutions to shore up their capital bases as measures to prevent a spread of the credit crunch, saying: "If they need capital, they should get it while it is available."

(6) G-7 joint statement: Host nation shows lack of leadership

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)

February 12, 2008

The G-7 meeting just held in Tokyo has put the caliber of Japan as

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the host nation to the test. While Japan was able to display its presence to a certain extent, reporting the lessons it has learned from the collapse of the bubble economy and the environmental measures it is using, it failed to come up with specific proposals for concerted actions on the key subprime loan issue. Japan also will host the Lake Toya Summit to be held in July in Hokkaido. The G-7 has shown clearly how difficult it is for Japan to display its leadership.

The United States remains the main source of risk for the global economy. During the last Tokyo G-7, held about eight years ago, Japan found itself in a similar position to that of the U.S. now. At the time, the Japanese economy was in a slump due to the collapse of the real estate bubble, reminiscent of the subprime loan risk, prompting increased concern over the risk to the global economy.

Finance Minister Fukushima Nukaga, who chaired this G-7 meeting, stressed how Japan turned around its economy by writing off non-performing loans. During the host nation's press conference, he proudly said, "Japan has experience, so I call on other countries to take all possible measures in dealing with the subprime loan issue, learning lessons from Japan's case."

However, the subprime loan issue, which is casting a pall over the global economy, is clearly different from the problem Japan had faced in the past. The subprime loan crisis is far more serious than Japan's housing loan crisis. That is because subprime loan claims have been securitized and marketed in many countries, spreading risks all over the world.

Japan's prescription based on the bad loan issue settled by injecting public money into banks cannot be straightforwardly applied to the subprime loan issue. Lessons Japan may have learned can only serve as a reference for G-7 members, starting with the U.S.

There is a mountain of other risks posing threats to the global economy, such as the sharp rise in the prices of natural resources and growing income disparities. Differences in economic situations among various countries have made the problem complex, as Finance Minister Nukaga noted. It is naturally difficult for Japan to spearhead cooperative activities as the host nation. Bank of Japan Governor Toshihiko Fukui noted, "Even if you do the same, you could not obtain the same result."

Japan has taken a proactive stance on the environment issue, another key agenda item. Teaming with Britain and the U.S., Japan announced a plan to establish a fund to assist developing countries acquire environment-related technologies, and the three countries succeeded in convincing other G-7 members to consider joining the project.

The summit this year is characterized as a prelude to the Lake Toya Summit. Several international conferences are scheduled in the run-up to the July meeting. Toshitaka Ito, professor at Tokyo University Graduate School, was harsh in his comment, though: "Western interest in Japan is not so high. To be brutally frank, Japan's presence is invisible."

The hard part for Japan, as the G-8 Summit host nation, in stabilizing the global economy and realizing sustainable growth has yet to come

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(7) New Osaka Gov. Hashimoto's controversial remark on Iwakuni issue; He has a knack for verbal attacks

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 26) (Full)
February 8, 2008

Osaka Gov. Toru Hashimoto, who took office on Feb. 6, has already created a controversy. Referring to the referendum on the relocation of carrier-borne aircraft that Iwakuni City in Yamaguchi Prefecture conducted in 2006, Hashimoto criticized it as if to say that a local government should not meddle in the country's defense policy. His skilled verbal attacks are in good form, even after he won a landslide victory in the recent Osaka gubernatorial election. This newspaper looked at his knack for bursting out with verbal attacks.

"I don't want to be criticized by constitutional scholars who know only constitutional arguments," Hashimoto said on Feb. 3 in Fukuoka City.

On Jan. 31, Hashimoto stressed in a videotape that there are limits to items subject to referendums under the legal system of Japan, which uses an indirect representative system. The video was produced to support a candidate for the Feb. 10 Iwakuni mayoral election. The candidate supported the relocation plan.

On Feb. 1, he criticized former Iwakuni Mayor Katsusuke Ihara, who opposes the government's plan, noting: "(Ihara) has not studied the Constitution at all." However, a constitutional scholar offered a counterargument that the expression of views by residents is freedom of speech.

On Feb. 3 in Fukuoka City, Hashimoto then argued: "I don't want to be criticized by constitutional scholars who know only desktop constitutional arguments."

Masahiko Goto, a lawyer and co-leader of the citizens' association to think about Yokosuka, home port for nuclear-powered carriers -- the group preparing for a referendum on whether to make Yokosuka a homeport for U.S. nuclear carriers -- cast doubts upon Hashimoto's interpretation, saying:

"The purpose of the referendum in Iwakuni was to ask the citizens what action the city, which negotiates with the central government, should take. The referendum did not have direct connection with the state. If local governments follow all decisions made by the central government, democracy will be unnecessary. He could say such a thing because Osaka has no military base. The head of a local government should not have made that remark."

Hashimoto, however, has made controversial remarks not only on bases issues but also on other matters since before he assumed the governorship. When asked about the possibility of his running in the Osaka gubernatorial race, for example, he replied: "200 PERCENT impossible." In connection with the murder of the mother and her baby girl in Hikari City, Yamaguchi Prefecture, he demanded on a TV program that the team of defense lawyers be reprimanded. On the other hand, disciplinary action against him has been called for. Commenting on a sex tour of China by a group of Japanese, Hashimoto said: "It is like an official development assistance (ODA) project to China."

Hashimoto has written a book titled, Strongest Negotiation Technique

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to Bring about Yes at End. In the preface to the book, he writes that persuading the other party even by employing sophistry and using excuses and even lies are acceptable, depending on the situation.

Some of the negotiating techniques introduced in the book coincide with his remarks on the Iwakuni issue. For example, he switched the focus of argument. The Iwakuni issue stemmed from the central government's violation of its promise to provide Iwakuni with subsidies for the construction of a new city hall in return for the city's acceptance of the relocation of U.S. carrier-based jets to Iwakuni base. The central government did not keep its promise because Iwakuni opposed the U.S. plan to relocate air-refueling tankers to the base in the city. The reason for the Iwakuni issue involves a relationship of trust between the central government and Iwakuni, but it has nothing to do with defense policy.

Moreover, Hashimoto writes in his book that adding unreasonable conditions to what one says is acceptable. He initially talked about the relations between the referendum and the Constitution, but soon after he was criticized, he added a condition that (scholars) do not understand the Constitution when it comes to the actual political scene.

Takeshi Yabe, the philosopher, compared Hashimoto to a child full of mischief, who pushes the doorbells of other peoples' houses. Yabe described him:

"He uses the method of 'downstream culture' in which a person trying to become the focus of public attention pokes fun at himself. But he has no intention to stick to that stance and so runs off after pushing the chime. He is coward and a slave to authority. This kind of person may be jealous of residents who take a respectful attitude toward the nation."

In his book, Hashimoto writes: "If you are personally attacked, you should counter that move. (Omitted) I would like to advise you to avoid such a situation by saying that you will refuse to continue the conversation if the other tries to correct your view."

Whether his strategy will be effective in serving as governor of Osaka is uncertain. The value of his literary works will be called into question, as well.

(8) METI to craft strategy to nurture green businesses into 83-trillion-yen market in seven years

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Abridged slightly)
Evening, February 9, 2008

The Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry (METI) plans to expand the nation's environment-focused business sector to about 83 trillion yen in 2015 from 59 trillion yen in 2005.

By June, the ministry plans to draw up policies to achieve this target that will include proposals for popularizing environmentally friendly technologies and businesses.

The ministry will promote the plan to participants at the Group of Eight summit meeting, which is to focus on environmental issues, to be held in the Lake Toya resort area in Hokkaido in July.

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The ministry estimates the domestic market for businesses tackling global warming could grow by 54 PERCENT to 49 trillion yen by 2015 from the 2005 level.

The government's estimate comes from expected new demand for energy-saving technologies to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and for natural energy, such as solar power.

The ministry also expects the market for services related to recycling and waste disposal to grow 20 PERCENT to 29 trillion yen, and that of businesses involved in preventing pollution to jump to 64 PERCENT to 4.8 trillion yen during the period.

The ministry also estimates the number of jobs in environment-focused businesses will increase 45 PERCENT to 2.6 million.

Achieving the target requires a number of ways, such as developing technology to halve electricity consumption in large data-processing facilities, improving the performance of solar and wind power generation, and increasing the collection of rare metals from discarded home electronics products.

The ministry's plan will include proposals to encourage development of environmentally sound technology, measures for increasing information disclosure to encourage investment in environment-focused businesses, and suggestions for educating consumers on the subject.

(9) Indonesian nurses, caregivers to come to Japan as early as by end of this year

ASAHI (Page 1) (Full)
February 11, 2008

It has been learned that Indonesians who will be candidates to work as clinical nurses and caregivers in Japan will come to Japan by the end of this year at the earliest, based on an economic partnership agreement (EPA) that the governments of Japan and Indonesia concluded last summer. Japan has a plan to accept nurses and caregivers from the Philippines, as well. The Philippines, however, has been late in ratifying an EPA with Japan. Indonesia will be the first country for Japan to officially accept workers other than those in specialized or technical areas such as engineers and college professors.

Indonesia's Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration, the contact point for the negotiations, is waiting for the Japanese Diet's approval of the EPA. The ministry will immediately enter into final-stage negotiations with the Japanese side on practical business affairs. The ministry then will start recruiting and selecting candidates. This was revealed by a senior official.

The two governments have agreed on the dispatch of 400 clinical nurses and 600 caregivers. Candidates for the clinical nurse slots require more than two years of work experience after graduating from nursing school or the nursing department of a college. Candidates for caring for patients require academic backgrounds similar to the clinical nurses and educational background equal to or better than special nursing schools. The candidates to be caregivers must receiving nursing-care training before leaving Indonesia.

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The Indonesian Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration has been studying the contents of training and practice tests in the country.

Once the Indonesian clinical nurses and caregivers arrive in Japan, they will acquire nursing skills while working at hospitals and clinics after receiving Japanese language training for six months. If they pass the national exam in Japanese, they will be able to stay in Japan indefinitely to work as clinical nurses or caregivers. However, those who failed to pass the exam will have to return to Indonesia. The Japanese government will shoulder their travel expenses and language training costs. The government included in the budget bill for fiscal 2008 approximately 1.9 billion yen for the EPA-related expenditures, including costs for those who will come from the Philippines.

(10) Poll on Fukuda cabinet, political parties, gas tax

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
February 5, 2008

Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage, rounded off. Figures in parentheses denote the results of the last survey conducted Jan. 11-12 unless otherwise specified.)

Q: Do you support the Fukuda cabinet?

Yes 35 (34)

No 46 (45)

Q: Which political party do you support now?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 30 (26)

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 24 (25)

New Komeito (NK) 3 (3)

Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 2 (1)

Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 1 (1)

People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0 (0)

New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0 (0)

Other political parties 0 (0)

None 34 (37)

No answer (N/A) + don't know (D/K) 6 (7)

Q: What do you think about Prime Minister Fukuda's job performance so far? (One choice only. Figures in parentheses denote the results of a survey taken Dec. 1-2, 2007.)

Beyond expectations 3 (4)

Up to expectations 21 (30)

Short of expectations 24 (13)

No expectations from the start 47 (48)

Q: Do you think Mr. Fukuda is a person of action? (Figures in parentheses denote the result of a survey taken Sept. 25-26, 2007.)

Yes 22 (46)

No 66 (32)

Q: Do you appreciate the Fukuda cabinet for its way of handling the pending issue of unaccounted-for pension records?

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Yes 33 (26)

No 55 (55)

Q: The gasoline tax is originally 29 yen per liter. However, the gasoline tax is currently added up to 54 yen with an extra tax portion of 25 yen for road construction and other road-related purposes. This added taxation is to expire at the end of March this year. After that, gasoline will be priced down. Meanwhile, the road-related tax revenues will decrease to almost a half. Do you think the 25 yen extra tax should be continued?

Yes 27

No 60

The government has now presented a bill to the Diet for a 10-year extension of the extra gasoline taxation. The DPJ and other opposition parties are opposed to this legislation, maintaining that the extra taxation should be discontinued. Do you think the ruling and opposition parties should compromise on this legislation?

Yes 55

No 33

Q: The government is thinking of incorporating the gasoline tax and other road-related tax revenues into the general account budget so that the road-related tax revenues can be used for other purposes as well. Do you support this way of thinking? (Figures in parentheses denote the results of a survey taken Dec. 1-2, 2007.)

Yes 54 (46)

No 35 (41)

Q: There is also an idea that suggests the need to continue the additional rate of taxation on gasoline and use gasoline tax revenues for environmental purposes as well. Do you support this way of thinking?

Yes 63

No 28

Q: The government plans to construct new roads throughout the country at 59 trillion yen in the next 10 years. Do you think the government should construct new roads as planned, or do you otherwise think the government should scale back on the planned construction of new roads?

Construct new roads as planned 14

Scale back on construction plan 75

Q: Do you think the House of Representatives should be dissolved as soon as possible for a general election, or do you otherwise think there is no need to do so?

Dissolve as soon as possible 34 (34)
No need to do so 56 (54)

Q: If you were to vote now in a general election, which political party would you like to vote for in your proportional representation bloc?

LDP 30 (25)
DPJ 32 (36)

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NK 3 (3)
JCP 2 (3)
SDP 1 (3)
PNP 0 (0)
NPN 0 (0)
Other political parties 1 (0)
N/A+D/K 31 (30)

Q: Would you like the current LDP-led coalition government to continue, or would you otherwise like it to be replaced with a DPJ-led coalition government?

LDP-led coalition government 33 (27)
DPJ-led coalition government 37 (35)

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted Feb. 2-3 over the telephone on a computer-aided random digit dialing (RDD) basis. Respondents were chosen from among the nation's voting population on a three-stage random-sampling basis. Valid answers were obtained from 2,082 persons (56 PERCENT).

DONOVAN